

REMARKS

Claim Rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a)

The Examiner has rejected Claims 1-5 under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Kuypers in view of Foley. Applicant respectfully traverses the Examiner's rejection in view of the following.

Kuypers describes a demountable vacuum-sealing plate on which is mounted an ion source, a mass analyzer, a detector, and associated ion optics, such that all of these elements are installed in one vacuum stage when the plate is attached to the vacuum system. The vacuum-sealing plate described by Kuypers represents a removable portion of a vacuum chamber wall separating the internal vacuum region from the external atmospheric pressure environment. Such a removable portion of a vacuum chamber wall is not the same as a wall or partition isolating adjacent vacuum stages internal to the vacuum system. In any case, as the Examiner states, Kuypers fails to teach the use of vacuum partitions for maintaining vacuum stages when the assembly is inserted into the vacuum system housing. In fact, Kuypers fails to teach more than one vacuum stage, so any vacuum stage partitions are irrelevant, and are not described, mentioned, or suggested by Kuypers.

Foley discloses a vacuum system that employs partitions or walls that form three vacuum chambers which are each evacuated through different pumping ports. However, the partitions or walls are fixed, integral features of the vacuum system. Hence, Foley does not teach or suggest vacuum partitions that are removable as part of a removable insert assembly.

In contrast to Kuypers and/or Foley, Claim 1 of the subject application describes "c) a removable insert assembly which includes at least three vacuum pumping stage partitions for maintaining three vacuum stages in said apparatus when said insert assembly is inserted into said vacuum system housing". Neither Kuypers nor Foley describe partitions between vacuum stages where the

partitions are removable, being part of a removable insert assembly, as described by the subject application. Hence, the subject invention embodied in Claim 1 cannot be considered obvious in view of Kuypers, Foley, or any combination thereof.

Claims 2-7 are each dependent on Claim 1, and are similarly limited. Therefore, Applicant believes that all the Claims should be allowed at least for the same reasons discussed above for Claim 1.

New Claims

Claims 6 and 7 are added in this amendment. The added Claims are supported by the specification and do not contain new matter. Applicant notes that Claims 1-7 as submitted here have been allowed in Canada.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'T. Rotberg', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

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